Aquifer Tour

Painted Rocks Gauging Site

Park at the Painted Rocks parking lot and follow the path south to the Little Spokane River. Near the Rutter Parkway bridge is a circular corrugated metal stilling well with a locked box on top. This is the U. S. Geological Survey gauging station containing equipment which continuously measures the elevation of the surface of the river. This information and information from a similar gauging site near Dartford seven miles upstream is used to calculate how much water is flowing out of the Aquifer through springs between the two sites.

Spokane Hatchery

Griffith Spring, located at the Spokane Hatchery, is one place water flows out of the Spokane Aquifer. Water from this spring, and other springs in the area, flow to the Little Spokane River. The Hatchery needs very clean water to grow its fish. To keep the water clean, the hatchery asks that people stay out of the springs area. Group tours can be arranged by calling (509)625-5169.

Hauser Lake Recharge Area

This recharge area is located south of Highway 53 just east of the state line. Turn southeast onto Prairie Avenue and stop near the culvert just before the second railroad crossing and view the field. A stream flows out of Hauser Lake, through a culvert under Highway 53, and into this field. The stream never reaches the Spokane River because the ground is so porous the water sinks into the unsaturated zone and then recharges the Aquifer. The best time to see this recharge is during the spring runoff.

Well Field

The Consolidated Irrigation District well field is at the corner of Idaho Road and Kildea. The objects that look like R2D2 robots are pumps that bring water from over 100 feet below ground up into the tower above you. From the tower water is distributed to where it is used: a house, a field, or a business. Not all pumps and water towers look like these. Many pumps are located inside small buildings.

Original 1907 Well

Turn north onto Waterworks at the blinking yellow light near the 4600 block of Trent Avenue. Follow Waterworks to the Upriver Dam visitor parking lot. The first public water supply wells in the Aquifer were dug here in 1907. More public water supply wells have been dug near the dam since 1907. The City of Spokane operates the dam and monitors its water distribution system from the facility at Upriver Dam. Group tours can be arranged by calling (509) 742-8156.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

4401 N. Aubrey L. White Parkway. If your home is connected to the City of Spokane-Spokane County sewer system, all the water that goes down your drain and into the sewer ends up at this plant. Coeur d' Alene, Post Falls, and Liberty Lake also have wastewater treatment facilities. The wastewater is treated with solids removal, aeration, bacterial activity, and disinfection. Fish can live in the water by the time it is discharged into the Spokane River. Groups tours can be arranged (509)625-4600.

Gravel Pit

Drive along Thierman Street and Heacox Avenue between Sprague and Broadway. This gravel pit is another place to see the rock material of the Aquifer in the Spokane Valley. No vegetation hides the rock material because the pit is still being used. The pit extends below the water table and exposes the water of the Aquifer.

Sullivan Park

The park is just north of the river on the west side of Sullivan Road. You can see many big boulders like the kind in the Aquifer along the Spokane River at Sullivan Park. When the Spokane River is low, springs are visible around the Sullivan Road bridge pilings. This is water from the Aquifer flowing into the river.

Hand Pump

From Interstate 90 take exit 299 (last exit in Washington). Park in the Centennial Trail access parking lot just south of the interchange. Walk east about half a mile along the Trail and across the river to the hand pump and sign. Before electricity many people used hand powered pumps to get water from the ground.

Post Falls Dam

From Interstate 90 take exit 5 (Spokane Street). Go south on Spokane Street one block, then turn right on 4th Street and drive to the end of the street to the parking lot. The Post Falls dam restricts the flow of the Spokane River during the summer months. This is important to the Spokane Valley - Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer because water seeps out of the bottom of the river and into the aquifer between the Post Falls dam and Barker Road in the Spokane Valley. The lower the flow in the river, the less water gets into the Aquifer. Right at the dam, bedrock prevents leakage out of the bottom of the river.